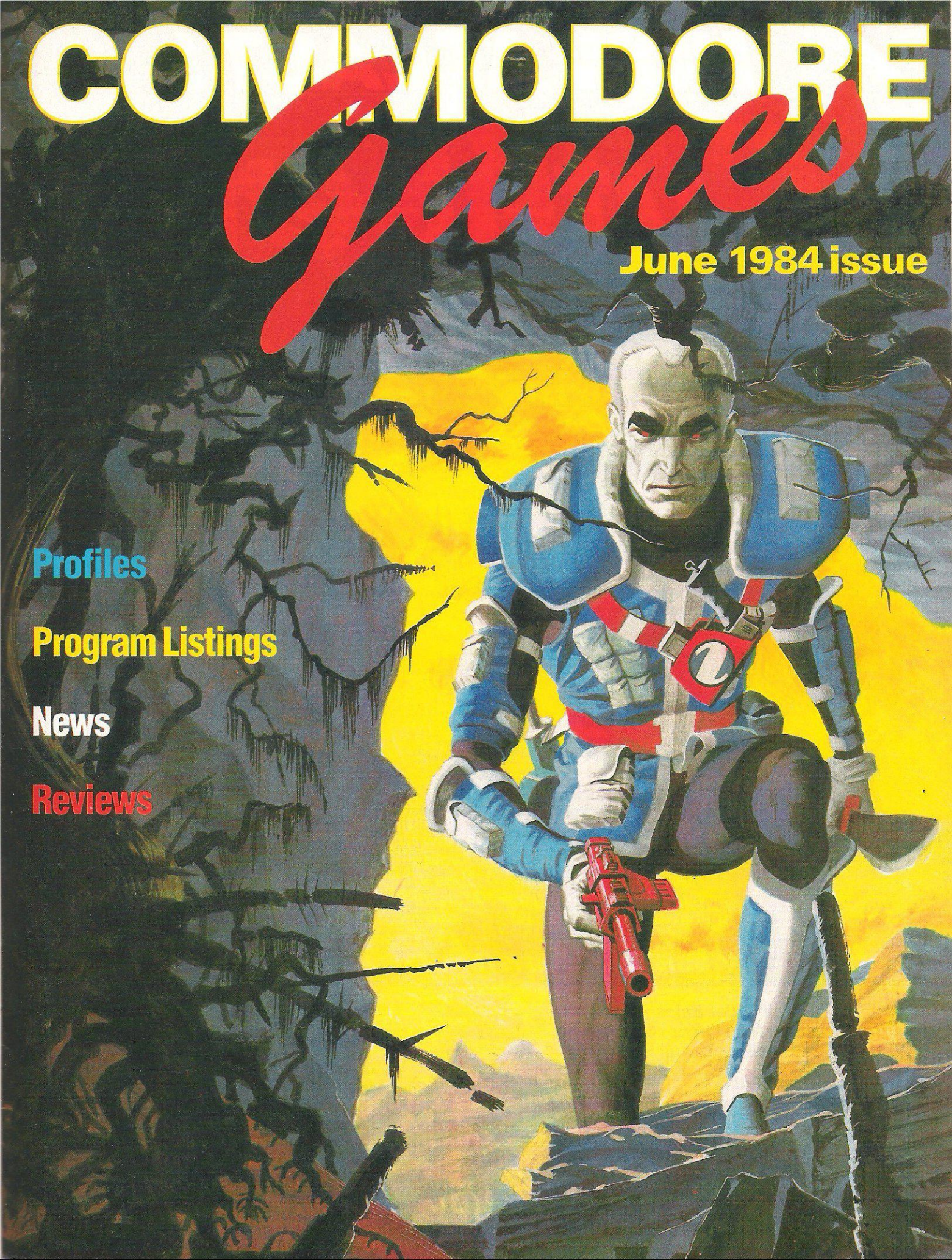
COMMODORE Games

June 1984 issue



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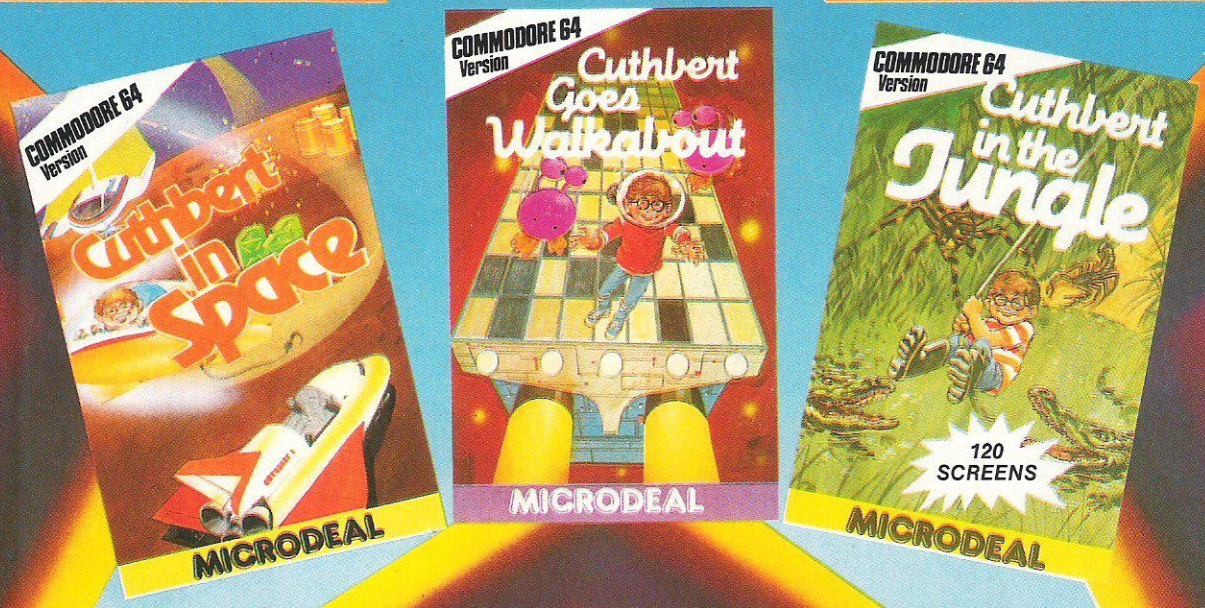
NOW AT LAST!

Cuthbert ON THE Commodore 64



Yes at last those fantastic top selling games for the Dragon are now available for your Commodore 64. Avoid those Marauding Moronians in "Cuthbert Goes Walkabout". Fight for survival in "Cuthbert in the Jungle" or plunder the Moronians planet in "Cuthbert in Space". These great games are a "must" for your software collection.

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Games, games and more games

Numerous interesting games were launched at the Personal Computer Games Show in Solihull at the Easter week-end. Over forty software companies were represented and many of the stands had arcade facilities.

A number of attractions had been arranged for the show. Radio One were transmitting their 'Music Marathon live in another part of the building, but many people were surprised to find that entry to the music contest was an extra £6.

Over seven and a half thousand people attended the show and a show organiser said that he was happy about the figures although they were slightly disappointed by the low attendance for the Radio One show.

Other attractions at the show included Droid, a metal robot, a huge air balloon above the building and loads of software competitions sponsored by some of the companies in the show.

Lemmie, lead singer of Motorhead, paid a visit to the Romik stand to play the new game for the 64, Turtle Jump. Ekim, a giant ant, has been trained by pirates to find treasure. In the search, he has to jump over turtles, crocodiles and other solid objects, eat the fruit on the islands for energy and finally take the treasure from the chest. The cassette costs £6.99. Romik also introduced the Multisound Synthesizer. Retailing at £14.99, it can be used as a keyboard or tunes can be created utilising a wide variety of sounds.

The most recent games for the 64 from Interceptor Micros are on cassette or disk costing £7 and £9 respectively. In Aquanaut, order is maintained by a submarine patrol until the Caves of Shallic appears. Armed with sea tanks, missiles and hunting mines the patrol must destroy the Shallic Caves, Lead the patrol to the deepest cavern and return to base to win.

Trapping butterflies and flies is the aim of Spider and the Fly. Encircle an insect and complete a web, but watch out for the dangers. Wallie goes to Rhymeland is all about a hero armed with chewing gum who enters into the world of Little Miss Muffet and Bo Peep. Get the golden ring to be victorious.

Alice in Videoland, the new Audiogenic game seemed to attract attention at the show. The player takes the role of Alice and wanders through screens featuring characters straight out of the book, scoring points and negotiating some tricky situations. Available on disk for £12.99.

Mastertronic, a relatively new company displayed a large variety of games costing just £1.99. The newest releases for the 64 and VIC-20 included Sub Hunt, Squirm and Phantom Attack. A company spokesman told CCI that they had dropped the prices after extensive research into the software market. He emphasized that in no way did the price reflect the games quality.

Jeff Minter clad in Llama T-shirt, Llama jumper and clasping a stuffed felt Llama made his appearance at the show. His new game, Sheep in Space, made its debut and to celebrate they had a large woolly sheep hanging on the stall wall. As with their other games all the action takes place millions of miles away in metagalactic space, but this time you are controlling an interstellar sheep. Available on cassette for the 64, it costs £6.50.

Enigma Software specialise in putting two games on one cassette and two cassettes were released at the show. Insectamania and Planet Zeus on one and Planet Plakton and Planet Zacron on the other. Both are for the VIC-20 and cost £5.50. The other new release was The Game, a fast version of Pacman for the VIC-20 and 64, also £5.50.

Creative Sparks, a new label from Thorn EMI, had their two new games on show: Black Hawk, an action game with a strategic element and Slurpy, a cave creature with a voracious appetite. Both for the 64 on cassette costing £7.75.

Phoenix claim to have introduced a new concept in games – an action/adventure game in a twin cassette pack. By solving the clues in the action game, solving the adventure game is a breeze. The other new release for the 64 is the O'level Caper – be a grade A hero and switch exam papers. Both games retail at £9.99.

Finally Alligata, who you might have seen on Easter Friday's Breakfast Telly, launched five new arcade games retailing at £7.95 for the 64 – Loco, Guardian, Son of Blagger, Eagle Empire and Panic Planet.

There were plenty of interesting competitions, games and other new products to interest the public. There were no catering facilities on the first day, but despite small lapses in organisation, PCG were confident that everything had gone well.

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CCI Master Gamer Contest

Venue: The Commodore Show, Novotel, Hammersmith, London
Date: June 7, 8 and 9.

So you think you're good at playing computer games... here's your chance to prove it.

At the Commodore Show in London Commodore Computing International will be looking for the best games player.

We have selected three of the best games for the Commodore 64 and entrants will be able to play each game for a limited time – or until death! The highest score in each session of two hours will receive a prize and the overall winner each day will receive a bigger prize.

The Commodore Master Gamer will be judged over the three days of the show. The person who has achieved the highest score during those three days will be the Commodore Master Gamer.

Prizes include games from all three software companies – Romik, Anirog and Audiogenic – plus £50 worth of software daily from Commodore themselves.

You should register for the competition as soon as you arrive at the show. The competition will be running for six hours each day of the show and there will be three sessions of two hours. Our time is obviously limited so preference will be given to those who can produce the entry form at the show. We reserve the absolute right to restrict entry.

You will be able to follow your own and others' progress on a board in front of our stand. LOOK OUT FOR US ON STANDS 117 and 118.

I would like to enter the Commodore Master Gamer Competition. My name is _____

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The professionals

Continuing our look at programmers

Nalin Sharma – Quicksilva

Nalin Sharma was taking a self-imposed break from programming due to imminent A Levels when we spoke to him. He is the author of Quicksilva's synthesiser, Ultisynth.

Now aged 17, Nalin bought his first computer, a ZX81, three years ago. "We got onto the topic of computers at a friends house," recalls Nalin. "I started reading computer magazines and became more and more interested.

"I used to visit amusement arcades, but the 10p's add up and my pockets were soon empty," he continues. "I thought if I could write one of those games I would be on to a winner."

His ZX81 was soon replaced by a VIC-20 and Nalin taught himself both Basic programming and Machine Code.

Writing games is the sort of programming Nalin enjoys most, but one of his first projects was Ultisynth. He explains: "It was a challenge. I knew that if I could write a synthesiser program I could do anything."

It took Nalin nine months to complete Ultisynth, although half of that time was spent in research – reading books and finding out all about synthesisers.

"I started my research in January '83," says Nalin. "Ultisynth is written in Basic and in Machine Code. I wrote the Basic part in May and then had to break for exams. The Machine Code section took me about four weeks to write and then I went away on holiday."

On his return, Nalin tidied up his program and approached Quicksilva who accepted it immediately. Ultisynth is now selling well, although Nalin was not altogether happy with Quicksilva's decision to market the program at £14.95. He says: "I wanted to price it at around £10 – a price that everybody could afford."

Nalin has no problem in thinking up new ideas for games. "They just click," he says. "I think of something and then try to relate it to a game. Take Jeff Minter, his idea for the game Hovver Bovver came from just looking at a lawn."

Once the idea is there, he puts it all down on paper before committing it to the computer. A method Nalin finds saves time in the long run.

When his exams are out of the way, Nalin hopes to take a year off before going to university – not to study computer science! "What I would really like to do is work full-time for a software company during my year off," says Nalin. "I've got a lot of good ideas for games which I'm sure will be successful."

Mike Wacker is one of America's leading games programmers and has topped the US games charts with titles such as Video Vermin and Annihilator. He also wrote several of the titles which launched Mogul Software earlier this year including Labyrinth of the Creator and Fire Ant.

Mike has been writing games programs for two years now and has had 12 Commodore 64 and VIC-20 games published. Fire Ant is one of his latest games and is reviewed elsewhere in this issue.

"I consider Fire Ant to be my best game so far because it is completely original," says Mike. "Fire Ant deliberately has a lot of variety to it and it isn't just a simple shoot-em-up. It takes brains to play it."

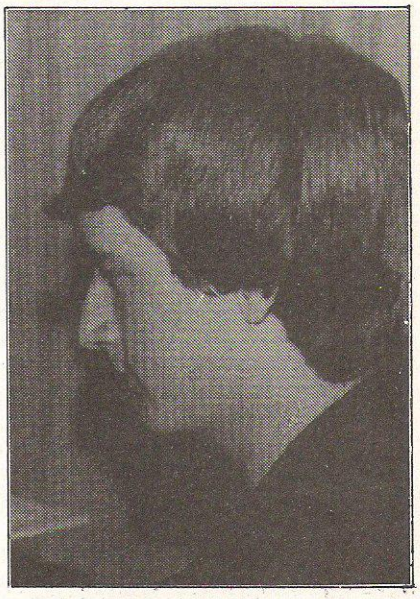
Ideas "fall out of the air" for Mike and once there, he uses a systematic approach to develop the game. Mike explains: "I usually think the whole game through in terms of the storyline and what I want to happen. Then I might code it down on paper first and see if it will work before programming it into the computer. Then it is a case of slugging it out and refining it again and again until I am totally happy with it."

It can take Mike anything up to two months to write a game, although his record time is 11 days (Annihilator). "I always spend a lot of time refining each game," says Mike. "I have re-written some programs five or ten times, but the game gets stronger each time and that is the objective of it all."

Mike believes that there will be a growing trend towards supergraphics – highly detailed pictures – and he usually develops his characters first before adding them to the game at a later stage. He comments: "I usually have the characters all drawn out first to see what they look like and to make sure they fit the theme of the program."

The hardest part of writing a new game for Mike is in thinking up a title, although he doubts whether many people would buy a game on the grounds of the title. He considers a game's playability to be the main selling factor. "Good game play and graphics and lots of variety in terms of having plenty of things to accomplish are the key ingredients. I always put a lot of emphasis on these areas."

Mike, now 20, is currently a student of electrical engineering and has so far resisted the temptation to leave college to become a full-time programmer. He says: "My ambition is to become an electrical engineer. I don't particularly want to go into the software business. I am content just to do the programming and then sit back and watch the money coming in!"



Mike Wacker – Mogul

Terry Watts became involved in computers mainly out of curiosity. He says: "I had no idea what a computer looked like, so I bought a kit – the old UK101."

The benefits of being a self-taught programmer outweigh the disadvantages, according to Terry. "There are a lot of trained programmers around and they tend to do things in the way they were taught," says Terry. "It produces a 'samey' effect, whereas all my work is totally original."

Terry also feels that his age – 42 – works to his advantage. "Kids have a lot of advantages being brought up with computers. I had to fumble my way through, but in the long run it is paying off." Terry continues: "Kids may write a couple of good games, but then the chances are they will discover girls or other attractions, whereas someone like me with a stable family background can keep their mind on programming."

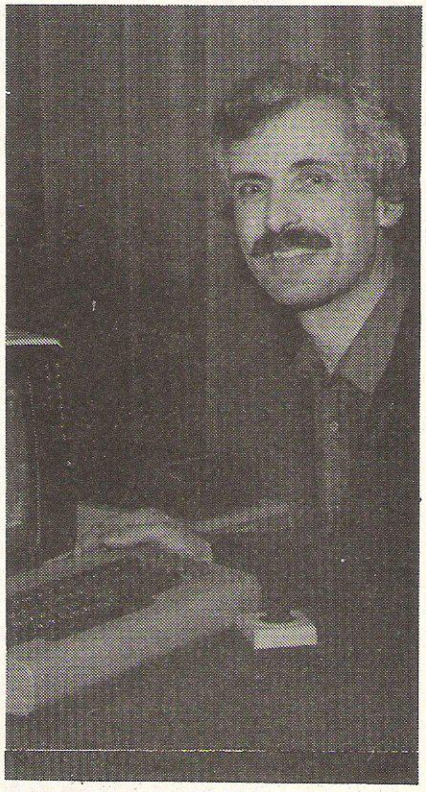
An active two and a half year old son means that daytime programming is impossible for Terry who does most of his work on the computer between midnight and 6 am. He says: "I can't work on the sound of my games at night as my wife says that noises of aliens attacking give her nightmares! So I work on the visual side which is where all my games start. Odyssey (one of Terry's latest K-Tel releases) started when I was just playing around with the computer. I found an effect that looked interesting and took it from there."

Terry explains that ideas come very painfully to him. "I have to dredge them out and then nine out of 10 ideas go straight in the bin, mainly because my wife is very critical," he says. Not that he is complaining. Terry knows that if both he and his wife like a game he is onto a winner.

His association with K-Tel began when the software house asked programmers to submit games. K-Tel accepted 10 games, two of which were Terry's. These were for the VIC, but K-Tel provided Terry with a 64 so he could start programming 64 games for them.

Terry also runs a dancing school so he was the ideal person to program a 64 version of K-Tel's game It's Only Rock and Roll. "I used to play in a rock and roll band," says Terry. "So I knew how the band should look."

He plans to carry on programming until his "brain dries up". "Some people get hooked on playing games," he says. "I'm hooked on writing them."



Terry Watts – K-Tel

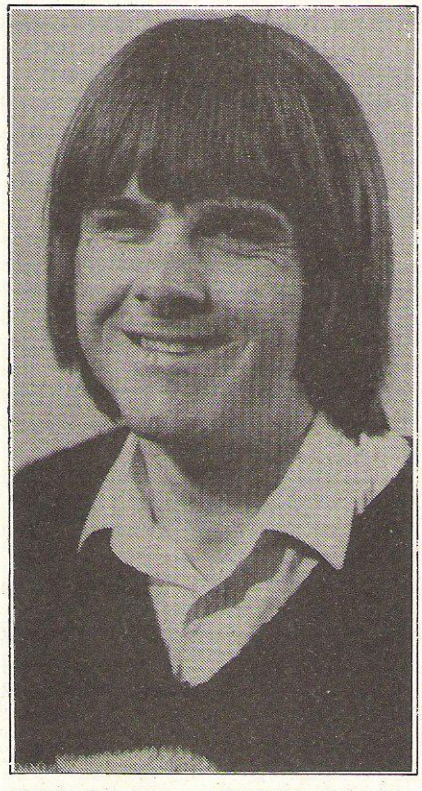
Nick Strange is one of Bubble Bus' in-house team of programmers and among the games he has written are Hustler and Kick Off. After university he became a multi-electronic engineer and it was during his first job that he met one of the directors of Bubble Bus. Together they started writing software for Commodore machines.

Much of the thinking behind the games takes place in the pub. Nick says: "We spend a lot of time at the pub discussing games, then each of us goes off and produces a game."

After the initial discussion stage, Nick estimates that each game requires a minimum of two to three months work, coding and then testing the game.

"I like to work out a game in sections," comments Nick. "And I work out everything on paper first – that's the way I have been taught to do it. I do most of my work on the 64 which I like doing as I now know the machine, but I'm looking forward to the emergence of 16-bit machines. The graphics will be better with more memory to use."

Nick enjoys writing and playing games which have no obvious solution, and here he quotes his own game, Hustler. "It is a pool simulation and you can never be quite sure where each ball is going to be hit," he says.



Nick Strange – Bubble Bus

Hustler was written for the 64 and can be played by one or two players. You have the choice of hitting any ball in any pocket, pocketing the balls in a particular order or hitting each ball into the correct pocket.

Working as part of an in-house team, Nick finds himself working a 50 to 60 hour week. He doesn't have a computer at home, but every other weekend he will take one home from the office.

"When I'm at home, my time on the computer is split 50/50 between work and pleasure," says Nick. "I also like to show my girlfriend how each game is progressing. She pulls them to pieces, but it helps to have outside criticism."

Nick and his colleagues at Bubble Bus enjoy playing computer games, unlike many programmers who become sick of the sight of them after spending all day and sometimes all night at the computer. Nick comments: "We play games all the time. There is a lot of crud on the market and people seem to be running out of new ideas for games. The market is changing and things can only get better."

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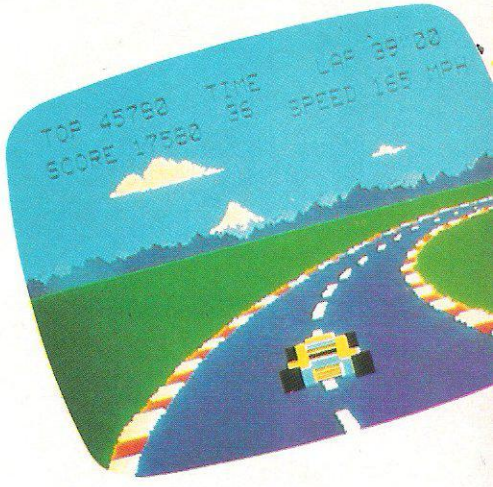
What can we say?



We're overwhelmed. Though we should just add that with Atarisoft, you can now play Pole Position* on the Commodore 64, BBC and Spectrum computers, as well as on all Atari® systems. Oh, and we're giving away free a Grand Prix kit and full colour wall chart with every game.

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FIRE ANT

Written by Mike Wacker

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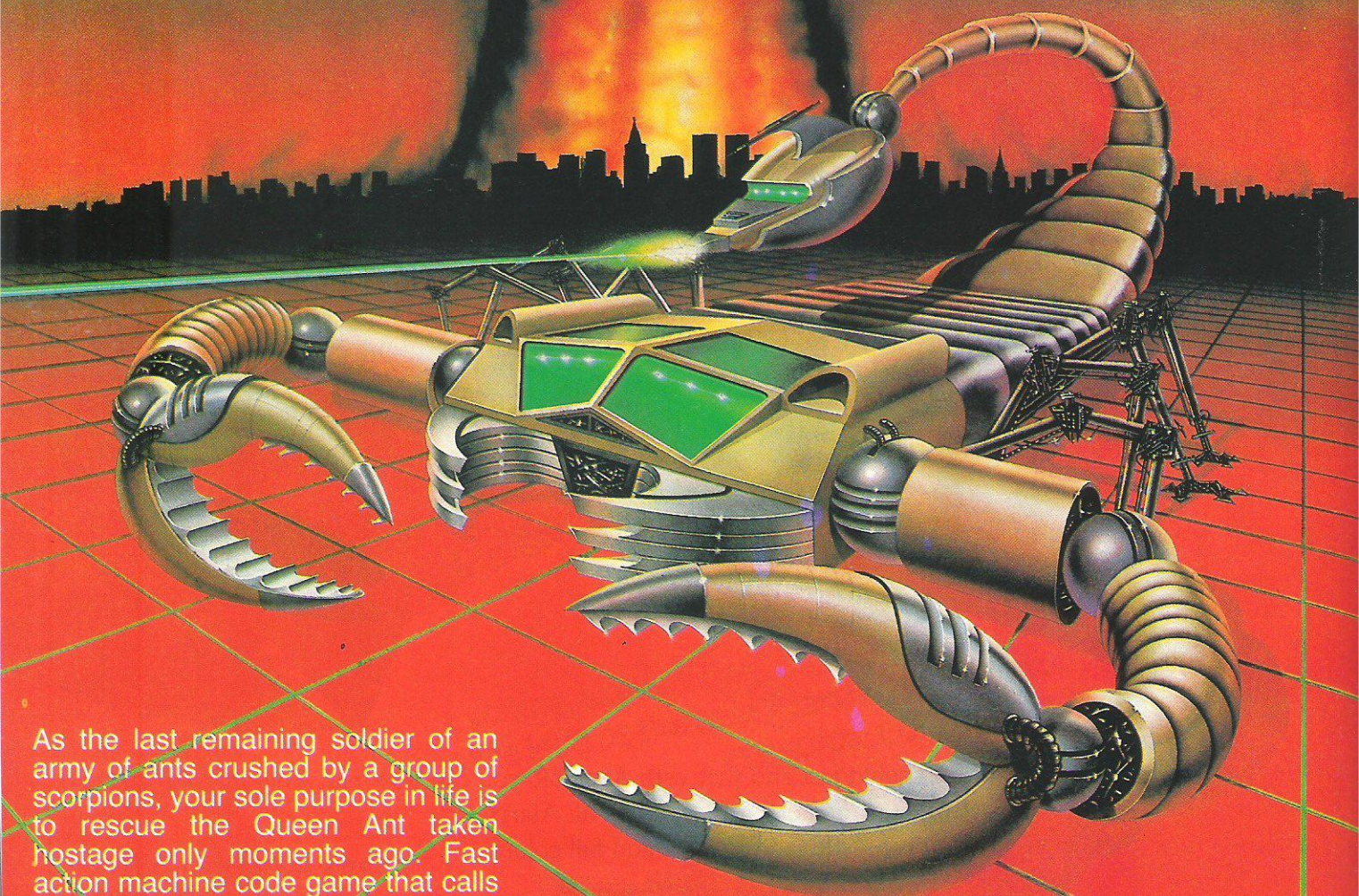


As the last remaining soldier of an army of ants crushed by a group of scorpions, your sole purpose in life is to rescue the Queen Ant taken hostage only moments ago. Fast action machine code game that calls for a winning combination of sharp wits plus extra fast reflexes.

Available for the Commodore 64

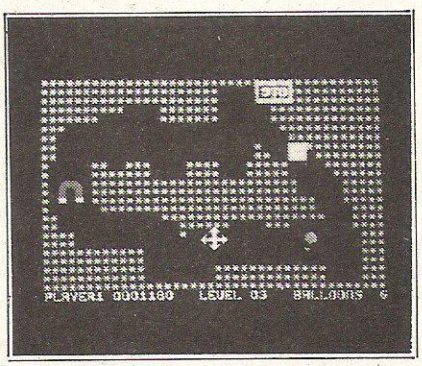
Protect and survive

Defuse a bomb, rescue the Queen Ant and discover the life cycle of a frog in this month's selection of recently – released games for the VIC and the 64

CRAZY BALLOON

Nathan Wigglesworth – balloonist extraordinaire is on the trip of a lifetime. Can he successfully complete the 26 flight levels and reach the final line? Not without your help he can't.

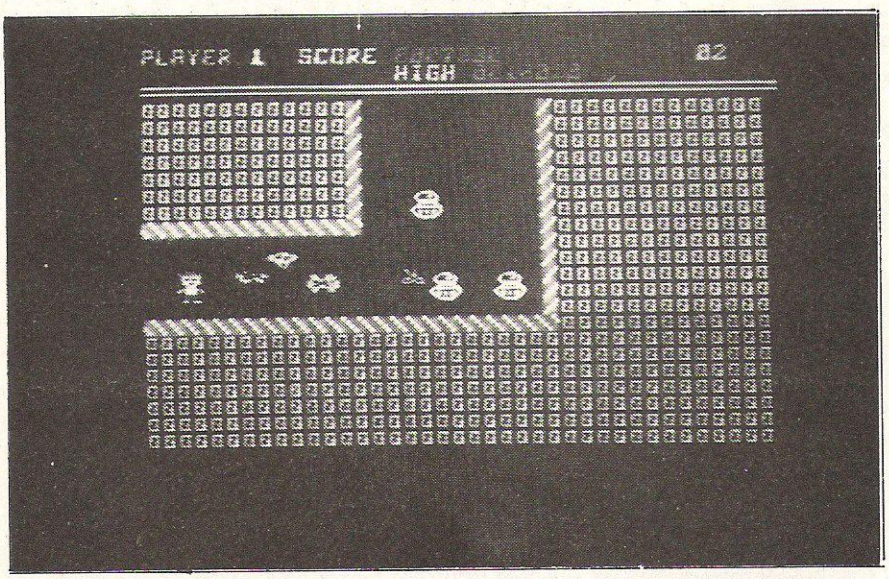
Each level seems to get more difficult than the last and by the sixth level extreme care and split second timing is needed. Each level is a sort of maze with prickly walls and often resembles a familiar shape, a fish or face for example. If any part of the balloon touches the sides it deflates and sinks to the ground. While making your way around each level, bonus points can be picked up by touching boxes and completing each level. There are some very difficult patches – narrow crevices,



magnets exerting a strong pull on the balloon and large prickly objects floating around.

There are five balloons per go and both the current score and the highest score are displayed. The graphics and sound effects are reasonable and Crazy balloon should appeal to those arcade fans who enjoy using their manipulative skills. It is a very tricky game.

Title: Crazy Balloon
Programmer: Chris Lancaster
Company: Software Projects, Bar Brand Complex, Allerton Road, Woolton, Liverpool, Merseyside L25 7SF. Tel: 051 428 7990
Hardware: 64, cassette recorder, joystick optional
Type of Game: Arcade
Graphics: ***
Sound: ***
Playability: ****
Description: Pilot the balloon through 26 flight levels
Price: £7.95
CCI Rating: ***



ZODIAC

All the signs of the Zodiac have been removed from the Time Vaults by evil master adept in the art of Black Magic and scattered about the corridors of time. Your task is to retrieve them and place all 12 in the central chamber.

Besides the demons Jessor, Jukul and Jufo zealously guarding each sign, destructive forcefields also flow along corridor and contact results in immediate annihilation. You wander along the corridors looking for the 12 signs, shooting the demon guards by moving towards them and firing. Once a certain number of points are achieved, the cubit gate opens and the demons multiply. Each level gets increasingly difficult and you have to be extremely quick to shoot them all before they touch you. The controls are fairly smooth and there are some interesting sound and graphical effects.

Once all the signs are collected you are transported to the entrance of the Time Vaults, all the signs disappear and reappear floating around the vaults. Great care is needed to retrieve the signs because the almost indestructible Jemon is on guard. Once you have the sign you lose your shooting powers and the only way to regain them is to drop the sign in the chamber.

Zodiac requires a lot of practise and some luck to play properly and should keep a shoot 'em up arcade fan occupied for a few hours.

Title: Zodiac
Programmer: Jef Gamon
Company: Anirog Software, 29 West Hill, Dartford, Kent. Tel: 0322 92518
Hardware: 64, cassette recorder joystick necessary
Type of game: Arcade
Graphics: ****
Sound: ***
Playability: ****
Description: Gather signs of Zodiac by fighting off demons and travelling through corridors
Price: £7.95
CCI Rating: ****

LEVEL 9 ADVENTURES

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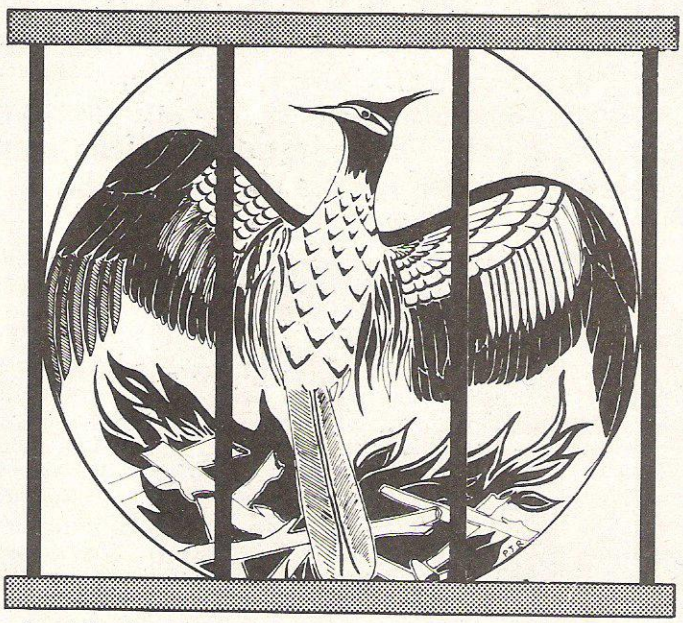
7: LORDS OF TIME. Our congratulations to Sue Gazzard for her super design of this new time travel adventure through the ages of world history. Chill to the Ice-age, go romin' with Caesars legions, shed light on the Dark Ages. etc. etc.



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REVIEWS

"Adventures which have a fast response time, are spectacular in the amount of detail and number of locations, and are available to cassette owners . . Simply smashing!" – *Soft, Sept 83*

"**Colossal Adventure** is included in Practical Computing's top ten games choice for 1983: "Poetic and tough as hell." – *PC, Dec 83*

"To sum up, **Adventure Quest** is a wonderful program, fast, exciting and challenging. If you like adventures then this one is for you" – *NILUG issue 1.3*

"**Dungeon Adventure** is recommended. With more than 200 locations, 700 messages and 100 objects it will tease and delight!" – *Educational Computing, Nov 83*

"**Snowball** . . As in all Level 9's adventures, the real pleasure comes not from scoring points but in exploring the world in which the game is set and learning about its denziens . . this program goes to prove that the mental pictures conjured up by a good textual adventure can be far more vivid than the graphics available on home computers." – *Which Micro?, Feb 84*

"**Lords of Time.** This program, writen by newcomer Sue Gazzard, joins my favourite series and is an extremely good addition to Level 9's consistently good catalogue . . As we have come to expect from Level 9, the program is executed with wonderful style – none of those boring "You can't do that" messages! Highly recommended." – *PCW, 1st Feb 84*

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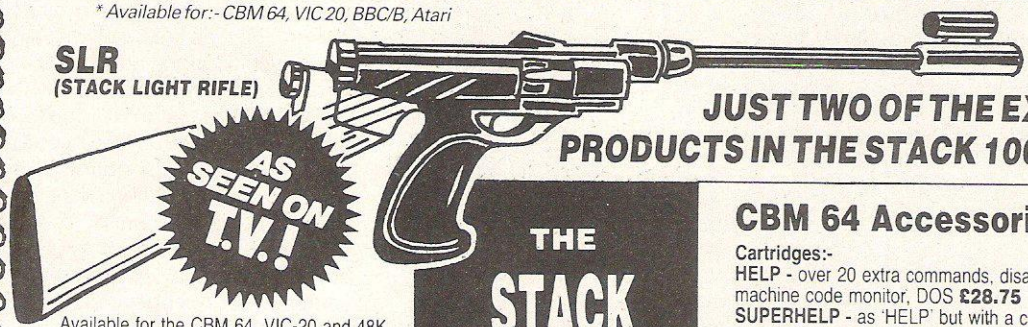

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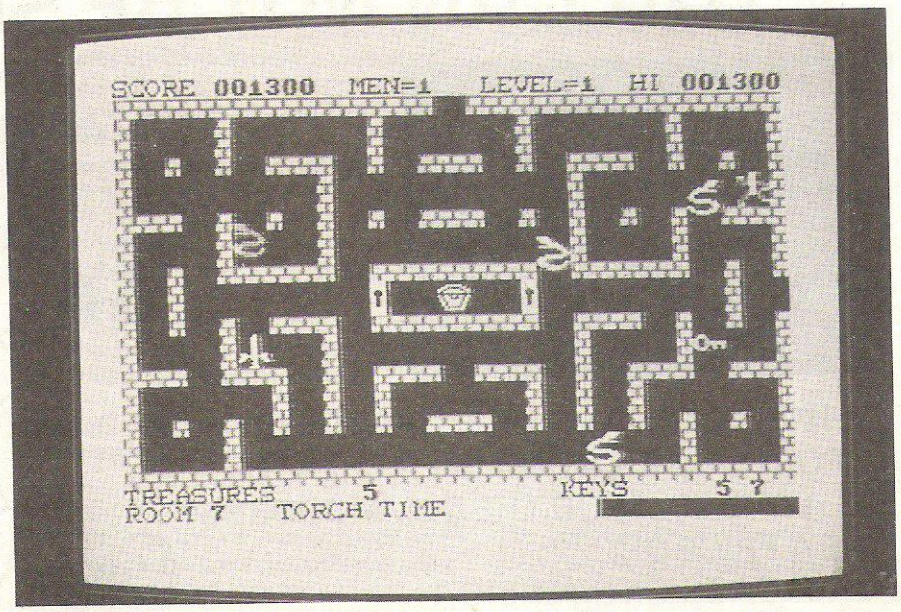

Fabulous treasure has been distributed around nine maze-like rooms and you, the intrepid bounty hunting explorer, must gather it while eliminating and avoiding pursuing snakes, bats, spiders and mummies with fireballs.

The rooms are arranged in a three by three square and are distinguished by their different border colours. Compartments containing the nine different treasures lie in the middle of each room and can only be opened with the right coloured key – an orange key for instance will be needed to open the orange room. These keys are randomly distributed round the rooms and have to be located.

The hunt is made all the more thrilling by nasty little creepies mentioned above who occupy two each of the eight levels you have to get through. Each treasure has a different quality, the white sword gives you an extended time to kill pursuers and the orange lantern gives you unlimited light which tops up the torch graph. If this is allowed to reach 0, the pursuers turn grey. Points are picked up for gaining levels, collecting treasure and killing pursuers.

There are a lot of little extras in this game, some great little tunes and both arcade and adventure fans would find something to interest them.

Title: Krystals of Zong
Company: P.S.S, 452 Stoney Stanton Road, Coventry CV6 5DG
Tel: 0203 81346
Hardware: 64, cassette recorder, joystick necessary

Type of game: Arcade/adventure
Graphics: ***
Sound: ****
Playability: ****
Description: Gather treasure from nine rooms while fighting off pursuing snakes, bats, spiders and mummies
Price: £7.95
CCI Rating: ****

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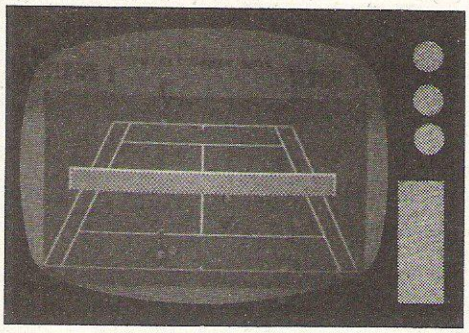

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*A very addictive game, excellently written by **David T. Coates.** A must for all cricket fans.*

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SAVAGE POND

Written in Machine Code, this game claims to be semi-educational in that it teaches the player the life cycle of the frog – not to mention the underwater hazards of dragonfly larvae and pollution. You start off as a tadpole and your first task is to eat as many amoeba as possible while avoiding the deadly larvae and hydra.

More hazards appear as you progress, such as jelly fish and radio active waste.

Once you have developed into a frog, you battle dragonflies and later mutant bees. A visit from a female frog produces spawn which hatches out to continue the development of the colony.

Savage Pond is an original and addictive game which can't help but to bring a smile to your face. The graphics are amusingly realistic. Most of the action is controlled by a joystick, but the game becomes multi-action with the frog's long, sticky tongue being operated by pressing the space bar. The joystick is not very responsive, but in some ways this adds to the addiction of the game.

The accompanying 8-page booklet is as amusing as the game itself.

Title: Savage Pond
Programmer: Gwyll Jones

Company: Starcade, 2 Elworthy Avenue, Knowsley, Merseyside L26 7AA. Tel: 051-487 0808

Hardware: CBM64, cassette recorder, joystick
Type of game: Semi-educational

Graphics: ****
Sound: ***
Playability: ****

Description: Breed as many frogs as you can without being killed off by natural hazards.

Price: £8.95
CCI Rating: ****

AMBUSH

Ambush is very much a space game, requiring fierce fighting tactics to deal with all the alien zapping and manouvring involved in the game.

On your way from one mothership to another, your fighter space craft is attacked by alien forces. These come in various guises – gruesome masks, birds, sea horses and they try to destroy you by either ramming or bombing the ship. At first they attack one at a time and it is fairly easy to kill them with the laser cannon, but on the seventh wave there seems to be a never ending supply and you will need a great deal of nerve, quick reactions and accurate firing to succeed, especially as they split into two when hit making them doubly dangerous. On the completion of seven waves, you redock and are re-armed with an even more powerful laser cannon. On the 24th level you get a twin laser cannon.

The graphics are quite interesting, the sound adequate and for all those keen on fast action arcade games this is for you.

Title: Ambush
Programmer: Brian Williams
Company: Virgin Games
Hardware: 64, cassette recorder, joystick optional

Type of game: Arcade
Graphics: **
Sound: **
Playability: ***

Description: Zap the aliens and reach your mothership
Price: £7.95
CCI rating: ***

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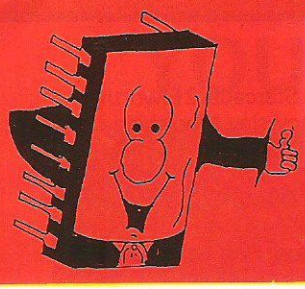

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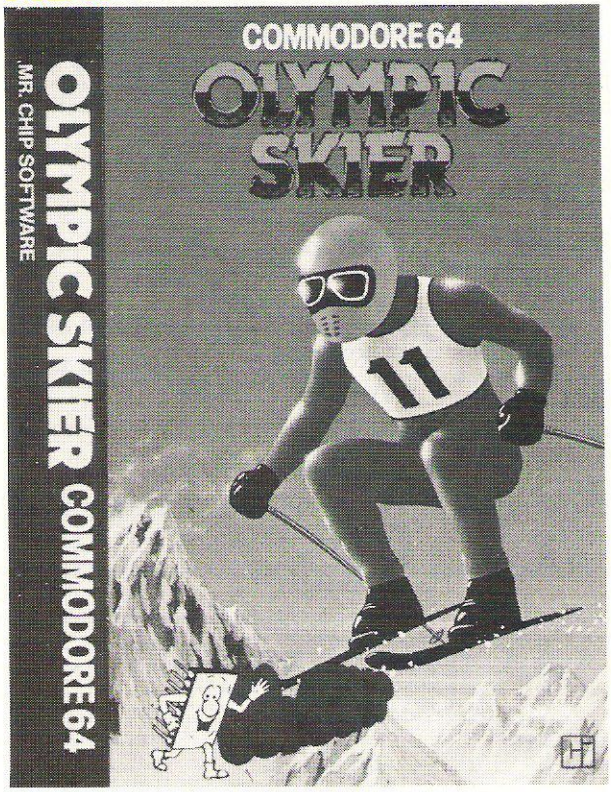

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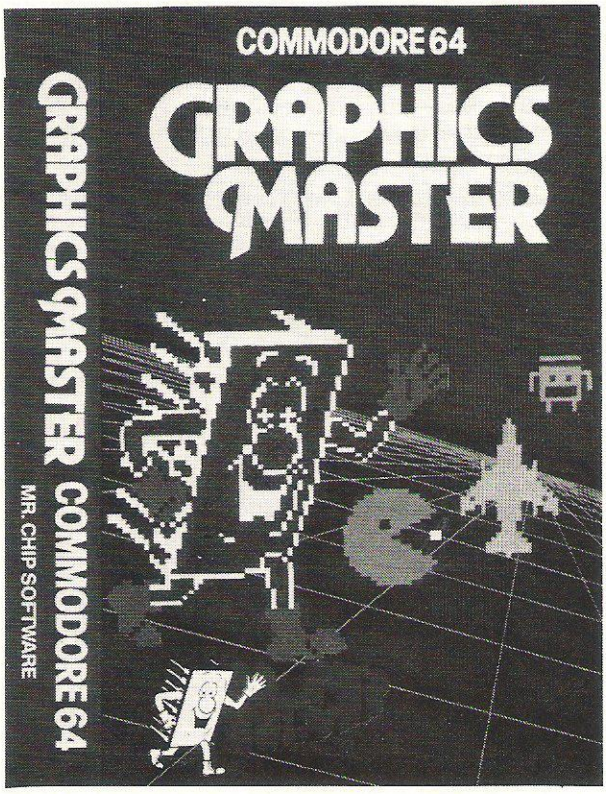

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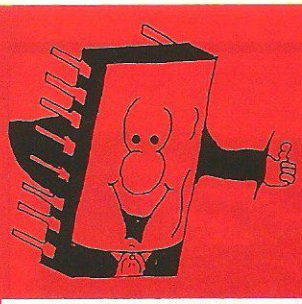

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KILLER WATT

Action takes place in an underground cavern. The player guides a submarine, using the joystick or keyboard, through the tunnels shooting fish and assorted strange creatures and avoiding collision with the walls and obstacles. The goal is to shoot all the balls hanging from the tunnel, get to the end and press a special button for entry onto the next level.

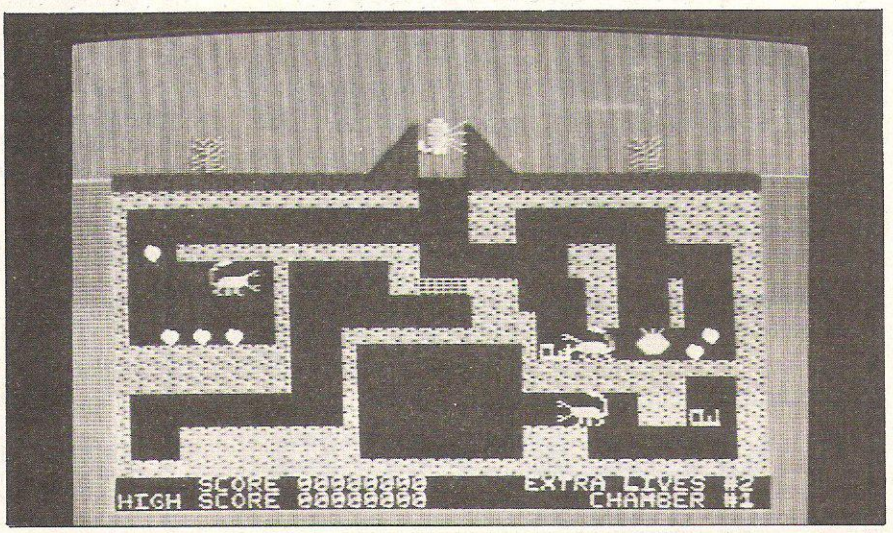
The game is graded with five shield and play levels. At the lowest shield level the submarine can afford to bump into something, but only for a short period of time. With the highest play level the number of creatures to attack increases.

The joystick control is so sensitive that the player has complete control. The scrolling of the screen is extremely smooth, the graphics are colourful and precise, the layout is interesting – the whole game is a professional job and well worth playing.

Title: Killer Watt
Programmer: Tony Crowther
Company: Alligata, Superior Systems Ltd,
178 West Street, Sheffield S1 4E2
Hardware: CBM 64, cassette player and joystick optional

Type of game: Arcade
Graphics: *****
Sound: ****
Playability: *****

Description: Guide submarine through cavern, shooting balls and creatures to get to final button.
Price: £7.95
CCI Rating: *****



FIRE ANT

An ideal choice of game to launch Mogul's new software label. We had great fun playing Fire Ant and compared to some of the arcade games currently flooding the market, this one had originality, wit and lots of action – a rare combination.

The scene is set in an underground ants nest and the scorpions (convincingly realistic with their curly tails) have just overthrown the colony and captured the Queen Ant. You, the last of the ants must negotiate eight nest chambers evading scorpions, collecting objects and breaking the barriers down.

The graphics are realistic and the sight and sound of the ant trotting along the tunnels is amusing.

Some careful thought is required (always a good sign in a game) and a combination of good timing, strategy and the correct manipulation of objects lying around – eggs, food, bits of wood, golden keys, amulets rendering scorpions harmless for a few seconds will result in the unblocking of the tunnels. I didn't get as far as the eighth chamber, but each level involves more cunning and skill as you go. A must for any collection.

Title: Fire Ant
Programmer: Michael Wacker
Company: Mogul Communications Ltd, 90 Regents Street, London W1
Tel: 01-437 3156
Hardware: 64, cassette recorder and joystick necessary
Type of Game: Arcade
Graphics: ****
Sound: ***
Playability: *****
Description: A lone ant must capture the Ant Queen from the invading Scorpions' clutches.
Price: £7.95
CCI Rating: ****

OMEGA RUN

The world is at war and your task is to prevent worldwide destruction by destroying the bomb. This device is housed in a pink silo and set to go off in 25 minutes.

Enemy defences in the form of fighter aircraft, anti-aircraft fire and ground to air missiles are the real danger. You are piloting a fighter and have quite a number of factors to consider to complete the mission successfully. Piloting the plane has been made as realistic as possible, by displaying an array of gauges and the aircraft windscreen's view. If the plane veers to one side, dives or climbs, the angle of the sky and ground changes.

Instructions accompanying the game are detailed and explain exactly what everything's for. The array of controls – fuel supply, power indicator, altitude, altimeter, clock (counting down), map (shows aircraft position), mirror, direction indicator and the number of bombs left on board all help you to combat the enemy and complete the mission. Additional factors in the game (for instance flying above 200 feet leaves you vulnerable to attack from enemy) make it more interesting.

Beginners have the option of customising the level they play at by choosing their level of vulnerability, target distance or else stick to levels one to five.

A lot of care has been taken to make the game as close to reality as possible and it will appeal to anyone who enjoys fast action games which involve some thought and strategy.

Title: Omega Run
Programmer: Richard Brisbourne
Company: Computer Rentals Ltd, CRL House, 9 Kings Yard, Carpenters Road, London E15 2HD. Tel: 01-533 2918.
Hardware: 64, cassette recorder and joystick optional

Type of game: Simulation
Graphics: ****
Sound: ***
Playability: ****

Description: Pilot fighter through enemy defences and destroy bomb

Price: £7.95
CCI Rating: ****

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- **NIGHTMARE PARK** is in fact a compendium of 14 games. The task of the user is to gain as many points as possible travelling through a maze beset by obstacles at every turn. These infuriating obstacles are overcome by a combination of skill, sharp reflexes or by sheer good luck making Nightmare Park a suitable game for all ages.

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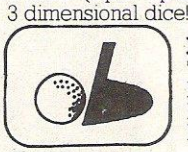

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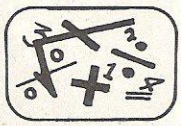

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Write your own game

How many times have you played a new computer game and thought you could have written a better game yourself? This month we're giving you the chance to do just that with the following guidelines to writing your own arcade game

Obviously your first move is to think up an idea for a game. Try to be as original as possible and develop a game that doesn't resemble anything on the market.

You will probably find it helps to write everything down on paper before typing it onto the computer. Think everything through before you get carried away in a fit of enthusiasm only to discover that your brilliant idea doesn't work at a later stage.

Bear in mind that a game should be challenging to even the most skilful player. Most successful games have a number of different levels, whether they're simply faster versions of the first level, or completely new and different scenarios. On the other hand a brilliant piece of programming which is very difficult to play will soon bore people.

Keep it simple. Most people prefer a joystick-operated game, but by all means keep both options open. When planning the keyboard layout make it straightforward and don't have people hunting all over the keyboard to find the right key in moments of panic.

Having got the idea down on paper, the next step is to transfer it to the screen. A lot of thought is needed to program an addictive game and it is often the little touches that help. The golden rule of graphics is to keep everything moving and changing.

The most important piece of design work in a games program are the major characters in the game. There is much scope for imagination here, especially with the graphics capabilities of a computer such as the 64. Don't give up if graphics design is your weak point – there is a variety of software available in the form of sprite editors and suchlike. One of the best we have seen is Romik's Graphics Editor. Due for release in the next couple of months, it features a character editor, sprite editor and also a screen editor.

Continuity is also a key factor. What will your characters do? Will they home in on you or wander down the screen? Where do they reappear if they go off the screen? Once you have decided, stick to that decision. No-one likes a game where movement of the various objects on the screen follows different rules from time to time.

You must also decide what will happen when characters collide. Will they sail past each other or will something happen to them. The important thing is to always keep something on the move to hold the attention of the player.

In addition to these rules of movement, it is also necessary to keep track of where the characters have moved to. How else will you know whether an enemy has been destroyed or not if you don't know where it's moved to?

This sort of thing is fairly easy with the 64, as there are routines to look after character collision assuming that everything has been designed in sprite form. Sprites may not solve your design and movement problems, but they will make life easier.

A scoring strategy is purely a matter of personal preference – whether you decide to award low or high points for zapping. You must also decide if there is to be a time limit to your game, such as fuel running out. As you can never beat an arcade game, the only incentive to keep going is to better your score. You will have to keep track of high scores. Ten should be sufficient with perhaps room to enter the player's name as well.

Your next consideration is the addition of sound. Good use of sound can really enhance a game and make it into something special. Sound is perhaps the most difficult feature to perfect. It must suggest impending action to assist the beginner, yet avoid antagonising the advanced player. It is also worth considering a prompt at the beginning of the game that allows the player to select a no-sound option.

Trial and error is the only way to perfect different sounds for each character and action. Distinct sounds suggest a hit, longer lower-frequency sounds suggest slow action, and high-pitched short sounds suggest fast action. Sliding frequencies represent continual motion.

Try to make your sounds as pleasing as possible and avoid shifting from low to high frequencies too abruptly as this soon becomes irritating.

Once you have got graphics design, movement and sound out of the way, you can start thinking about a title screen. This can be as simple as the name of the game and the programmer or a spectacular and colourful display.

We haven't mentioned colour yet. It should be added after the action, title and sound have been programmed and de-bugged. Generally, colour should be used to minimise the player's frustrations. Consistency is a key to proper use of high-contrast and subdued colours. Critical features and anything that's urgent should stand out clearly, whereas features that aren't viewed often and don't change much should be consistently subdued.

Be careful with the colours of adjacent characters as the eye is easily fooled by contrasts. Try also to avoid filling the outside display area.

The first game you write will be the hardest, but once you start to build up routines that can be used again it will get easier. Throughout the process of writing your own game you must continually test each and don't forget to keep backup files in case of accidents.

Good luck!

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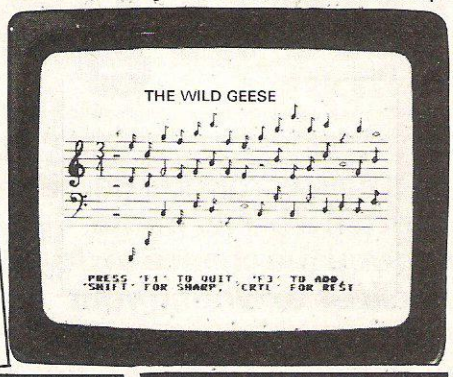

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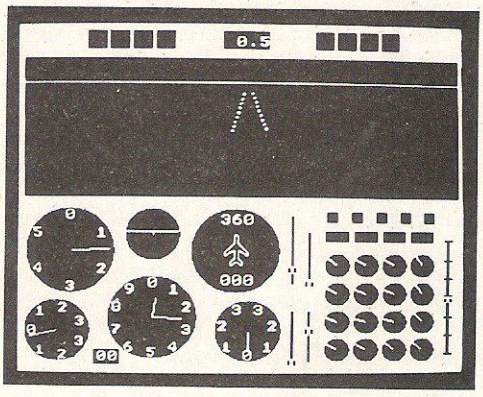

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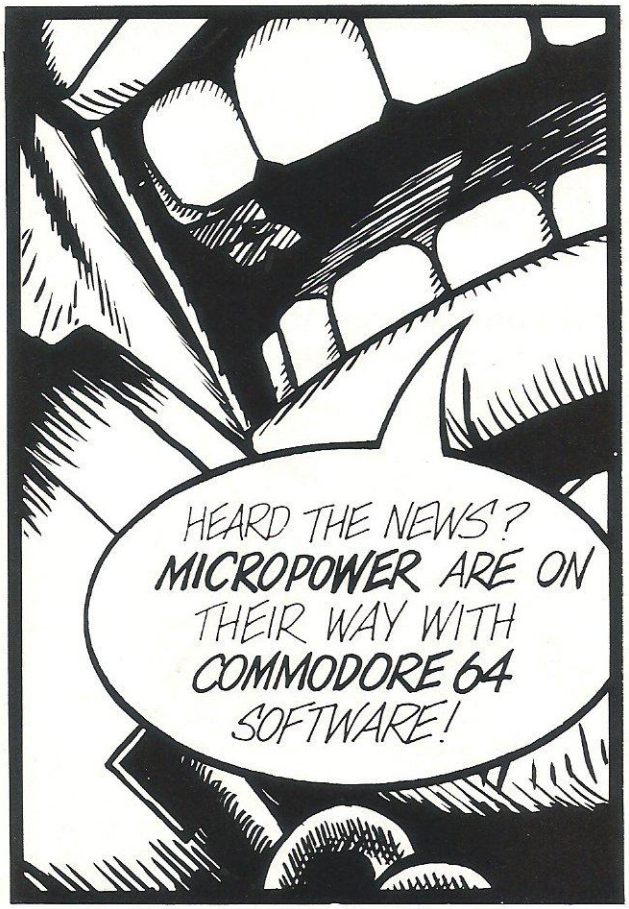

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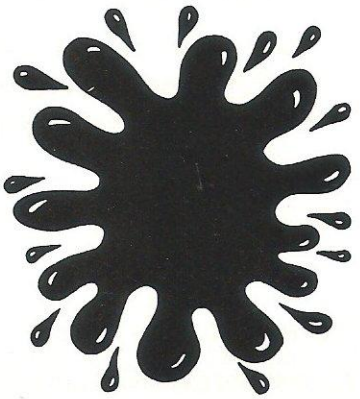

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Fun and games

This month we have a game for the unexpanded VIC-20 courtesy of Bo Svensson, of the Swedish computer magazine HEMDATORER

```
10 GOSUB1550:HI=0:DIMA(3):POKE53281,0:POKE53280,0:IN=0:H=0
20 PRINT"■";:CO=54272:GOSUB1170:PRINT"■":B$="NOBODY":LE=0:L=1:W=1:P=2004
30 PRINT"■■■
```

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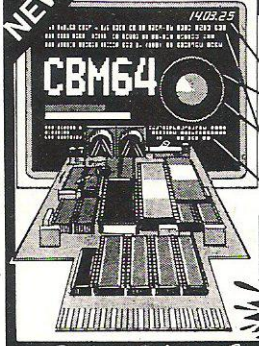

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```
500 POKEP-1,43:POKEP,44
510 FORJ=ITOI+1:IFA(J)=0THEN590
520 POKEA(J)-1,32:POKEA(J),32:POKEA(J)+1,32
530 IFW>12THEND1=3:D2=78
540 A(J)=A(J)+INT(RND(1)*D1+D2)
550 O=O+1:IFO>16THENO=1
560 IFA(J)>1944THEN750
570 POKEA(J)-1+CO,O:POKEA(J)+CO,O:POKEA(J)+1+CO,O
580 POKEA(J)-1,C1:POKEA(J),C2:POKEA(J)+1,C3
590 NEXTJ
600 IFK<>36THEN730
610 POKE54296,15:POKE54277,15:POKE54278,180:POKE54276,129
620 POKE54273,50:POKE54272,80
630 FORX=P-40TO1064STEP-40:POKEX+CO,7:IFPEEK(X)=32THEN720
640 POKEX+CO-41,1:POKEX+CO+41,1:POKEX+39+CO,1:POKEX-39+CO,1
650 POKE53281,2:POKEX,42:POKEX-41,41:POKEX-39,41:POKEX+41,41:POKEX+39,41
660 POKE54277,30:POKE54278,200:POKE54276,129:POKE54273,15:POKE54272,85
670 FORTY=0TO100:NEXTTY:POKE54276,0
680 FORY=0TO3:IFA(Y)=XTHENPOKEX-1,32:POKEX+1,32:S=S+100*W:A(Y)=0:N=N-1
690 IFA(Y)<>X+1ANDA(Y)<>X-1THEN710
700 POKEX+1,32:POKEX-1,32:POKEX-2,32:POKEX+2,32:A(Y)=0:S=S+50*W:N=N-1
710 NEXTY:POKE53281,0:POKEX,32:POKEX-41,32:POKEX-39,32:POKEX+41,32:POKEX+39,32
720 POKEX,45:NEXTX:FORX=P-40TO1064STEP-40:POKEX,32:NEXT:POKE54276,0
730 NEXTI:PRINT"■■■■%"S" !)■■%"HI:IFN>0THEN390
740 GOTO210
750 GOSUB1130:FORI=1TO1000:NEXT:L=L-1:IFL>0THENPRINT"■";:W=W-1:GOTO200
760 POKE650,0
770 GOTO800
780 FORG=0TO2000:NEXT:S=S+50000:PRINT"■■■■
```

```
1070 IFA$="N"THENEND
1080 GOTO1060
1090 POKE54296,15:POKE54276,17:POKE54277,90:POKE54278,180
1100 POKE54273,190:POKE54272,80
1110 FORG=0TO5:NEXTG
1120 POKE54276,0:RETURN
1130 FORTY=230TO0STEP-5:POKE54277,40:POKE54278,180:POKE54276,17
1140 POKE54273,TY:POKE54272,60:FORYT=0TO25:NEXTYT:NEXTTY:POKE54276,0
1150 IFIN=1THENIN=0:GOTO20
1160 RETURN
1170 POKE53272,30:POKE53280,0:PRINT"■■■
```

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1640 DATA60,255,129,255,102,102,24,60
1650 DATA0,24,60,102,195,126,0,0
1660 DATA0,24,60,102,219,90,24,60
1670 DATA0,62,195,129,195,126,24,60
1680 DATA0,62,195,129,195,126,0,0
1690 DATA99,119,127,107,99,99,99,0
1700 DATA102,118,126,126,110,102,102,0
1710 DATA24,60,24,255,153,60,102,195
1720 DATA24,25,27,30,28,222,219,249
1730 DATA0,0,0,123,66,122,10,123
1740 DATA0,0,0,239,108,110,108,236
1750 DATA0,0,0,122,50,51,51,49
1760 DATA0,0,0,38,169,239,233,233
1770 DATA0,0,0,115,75,115,83,75
1780 DATA0,0,0,224,0,128,0,224
1790 DATA99,99,99,107,127,119,99,0
1800 DATA0,0,0,255,153,153,255,0
1810 DATA7,3,15,3,7,1,3,15
1820 DATA205,205,205,205,205,205,205,253
1830 DATA252,15,14,15,8,15,12,254
1840 DATA0,0,0,134,134,134,134,246
1850 DATA251,131,131,227,227,131,131,131
1860 DATA0,0,0,247,132,198,132,135
1870 DATA0,0,0,120,64,120,8,120
1880 DATA0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0
1890 DATA0,0,0,219,219,251,219,219
1900 DATA102,102,102,0,0,0,0,0
1910 DATA0,0,0,247,132,244,20,247
1920 DATA0,0,0,119,85,86,85,117
1930 DATA0,0,0,120,64,112,64,120
1940 DATA0,0,60,60,60,60,0,0
1950 DATA1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1
1960 DATA128,128,128,128,128,128,128,128
1970 DATA0,0,0,0,60,60,0,0
1980 DATA129,90,36,90,90,36,90,129
1990 DATA0,1,3,65,225,67,127,63
2000 DATA0,128,192,130,135,194,254,252
2010 DATA48,48,48,48,48,48,48,48
2020 DATA12,12,12,12,12,12,12,12
2030 DATA0,3,6,12,24,48,96,0
2040 DATA126,66,66,66,66,66,66,126
2050 DATA24,56,24,24,24,24,60,60
2060 DATA126,2,2,126,64,64,64,126
2070 DATA126,2,2,14,14,2,2,126
2080 DATA102,102,70,127,127,6,6,6
2090 DATA126,64,64,126,2,2,2,126
2100 DATA126,64,64,126,66,66,66,126
2110 DATA127,3,6,12,12,12,12,12
2120 DATA126,66,66,126,126,66,66,126
2130 DATA126,66,66,126,6,6,6,6
2140 DATA0,0,0,199,196,198,196,247
2150 DATA0,0,0,75,74,75,122,51
2160 DATA0,0,0,176,48,48,48,188
2170 DATA0,0,126,0,126,0,0,0
2180 DATA112,24,12,6,12,24,112,0
2190 DATA60,102,6,12,24,0,24,0
READY.
```

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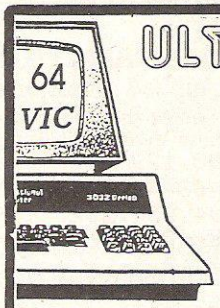

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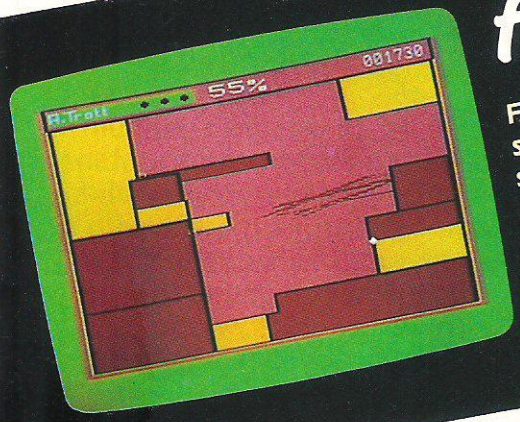

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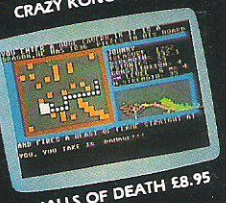

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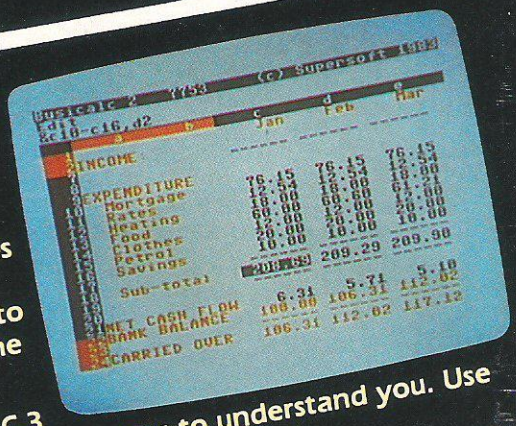

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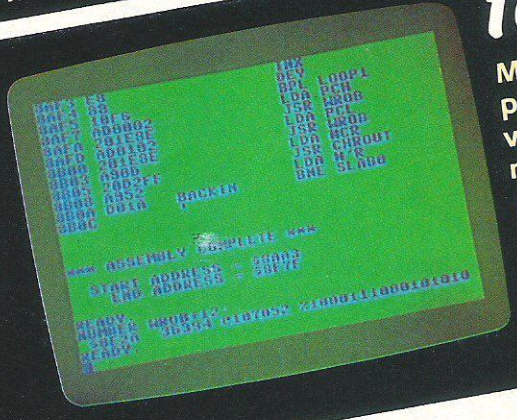

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